

CANOEING ALONG NICARAGUA.

Adventures on Sea and Shore Among the Mosquito Indians.

By DR. J. HAMPDEN PORTER.

We bought a dory 45 feet long, at the rate of two cents (25 cents) per foot. Our little vessel was a beauty, and fit to go to sea, after being refitted. An arbor of grass mats was placed over the cockpit for protection from sun or rain; lockers for provisions, and a new sail, put the craft in good shape, except that, having no keel, she did not behave very well with anything but entirely favorable winds.

Fortune was propitious in respect of getting hands; two expert young Indians from up the coast toward Gracias a Dios were hired, and with these to assist, our boat could be easily managed.

Bright and early on a breezy morning we took leave of the crowd that escorted us shoreward and sailed away from these Sancho republicans, devoutly hoping never to see them again.

Nicaragua's southeastern border abuts

make everything serene, or lay out a camp beneath one of those great but-trressed trees that grew here.

Day and night for a week together it blew and rained; but what interesting things we saw, or heard! Great water-boats fanged like panthers swam by; colossal themselves; immense, hideous alligators and bluish-nosed man-eating crocodiles of the Western tropics; legions of rattling land-crawls, with monkey troops, and shivering, bedraggled parrots, gorgeous though soaked macaws; once or twice the gliding forms of pumas; while by night the deep hoarse roars of jaguars boomed through these vast woods.

A watch was set, big fires were kept up, shelters protected us from rain. It seemed pleasant enough, considering our circumstances, and had often been very much worse as respects both danger or dis-

comfort. For one thing, the fare was excellent. No epicure can find anything better than roasted land-crabs, or cray-fish soup. A fat curassow stuffed with oysters clustered on dripping mangrove twigs, then rolled in wet plantain leaves and baked in a hole with hot stones, might satisfy the most exacting taste. So also iguana tail, moreover, a fat, well-fed young monkey, properly stewed with peppers, is far more appetizing than those who have not tried it would suppose.

All these delicacies were abundant, and many others also, so that we fared well. Night watches were not particularly exciting. We occasionally heard the plunging of some frightened tapir, a panther's scream, and always an intermingling of those wild voices which fill tropical forests while darkness lasts; but nothing happened in the way of adventure, and when clear skies came again our party started off to look for Indians and have some dante-hunting.

Dante, tilia, tapir or tapir—thus its names go—is a beast found almost anywhere along Central American streams. Early in the morning these creatures sometimes sit on shallow close to shore with only their heads out of water. Later they seek lairs in dense jungle to sleep during the day. We soon discovered natives gathering Indian-burrs, and went with a small band to one of their lonely little camps set away in endless woodlands.

The tapir is nocturnal, and does all its foraging during dark hours. This creature in form and character seems to link the elephants with the hog and rhinoceros.

Tapirs always lie up among dense cover, so that the emphasis which certain writers place upon their habit of traversing fixed routes is surprising for you if they have not any very high intelligence, nature has given enough sense to prevent them from breaking a new path through thick undergrowth every time it becomes necessary to move. Under other circumstances, as, for example, when frightened or tearing away with a jaguar fixed on its back, the brute bursts through almost everything; in fact, seeks places impervious to less powerful creatures, in hopes of dislodging its antagonist.

An ordinary tapir when full grown is about four feet high and six long; its frame looks thick-set and clumsy. Nevertheless, the beast has considerable activity and immense strength. When sprung upon by a tiger, instinct leads it to seek water. The American tiger swims elegantly, but he cannot fight except on shore; whereas, his victim is almost amphibious and perfectly at home while under water.

Dogs were necessary in order to hunt successfully during daylight, and as we had none, our object could only be attained by besetting a game path. Several Indians went out prospecting and found an evidently well-trodden trail, which they scented with large bunches, and everything else that could be gotten. Then as the sun set we started off.

American tapirs, with their Asiatic allies, possess extremely acute senses of hearing and smell. They are compensations for an entire deficiency in offensive armature, preserving this defenseless creature from enemies it is ill-fitted to encounter. On that account a position taken by hunters must be such as will not allow the game to scent them; but, having occupied a good, eligible place some distance up the trail, nothing more was needed upon our part than silence and patience.

When an animal passed we intended to close in, taking it between the abatis and our spears. Then, no doubt, its defense would be desperate, for tapirs can crush men and cut people with their front teeth very effectively.

Until moon-rise our guide through this muddy brake pursued his way, a Moorish Indian, named on the Dismal Swamp "padded her white canoe"—he went along by a "fire-fly lamp." We caught plenty of glow-worms, tied these up in a fragment of mosquito-netting, and this lighted us sufficiently to avoid bog-holes.

After some time an unusually large dante came stamping along. Letting him pass on for a short distance, we followed, and the fight commenced in front of our barricade. If food is really needed it is allowable to shoot tapirs, whose sports make pretty good eating; but no sportsman does so unless constrained by necessity. He encounters this game with a spear.

The one we pursued became enraged

after being wounded; though inferences from the behavior of wild beasts are apt to be erroneous. At all events, it charged and rushed about in such a furious way that there was much doubt whether our line would not be broken. One Indian had his shirt ripped, and got tumbled heels-over-head.

The animal's great weight and thick skin made it impossible for a single man to withstand an onrush; moreover, it cleverly showed front to us, thus avoiding any injury of consequences. One after another we had been more or less used up, when the tapir exposed his side while stopping to trample that same man who first went down before him. This finished the affair—a thrust behind the shoulder proved fatal almost instantly.

Rands of Rama Indians wandered about here, whose friendly, hostile attitude varied according to circumstances. It may be accepted for a general truth, however, that the average savage wherever met with, regards an assault upon any stranger as rational, praiseworthy and pious.

There were also Sambo communities scattered around, and these, being civilized, as a matter of course, became more dangerous in proportion to their remoteness from civilized neighborhoods.

We sailed down the river again, bound for Old Providence Island; but all day we were in store, and it looked as if that classic ground of pirates had been forbidden us by fate.

Running along shore the second night our boat struck on a submerged reef, whose sharp rocks cut through our bow. The little vessel leaked badly, despite all attempts at patching or plugging; that some spot where she could be leached for repairs became necessary. Unfortunately these coasts largely consist of mangrove swamps, low-lying, and with mud over ovals head.

We put into an inland reach that had a creek to its apex, and did our best with bailing, shifting cargo aft, and crowding ourselves to keep from being swamped; but, after several hours of hard work before the stream showed any firm ground on either side. At last marsh and forest came to an end, while broad on both hands spread wide savannahs, and beautiful, a park-like country stretched away westward until distant mountains rose in soft blue outlines against the sky.

So, no moment was wasted after our boat had been drawn up on the beach, and through industry, combined with good luck, toward sundown we ceased to be wrecked; that is to say, the party could get out, if needful without being swamped.

This repairing was completed none too late. It was finished soon, for ill-fortune had landed us near Sambo country, and we had seen where we were. They had seen us, however, and made arrangements to appropriate our possessions.

As we sat round a small fire eating something before leaving, a clump of men suddenly came out of some jungle that ran down near shore. This was not cleverly done, but it was not cleverly done.

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three of the number having removed to other States just previous to the breaking out of the rebellion, went from the States in which they were living; two were temporarily living in an adjoining County; all of the others were residents of the town. One family of five boys, sons of Wm. G. Myers, all went; one of them gave up his life at Gettysburg.

David Young had a family of five boys; four of them went; one of them, L. Cox Young, was several years ago Department Commander of G. A. R. of New York.

S. B. Leavenworth had four sons; three of them went; two of them died of disease. Of the 43 who were born in the town, nine are still living here. I wonder if any other town of its size can show a better record? ISAAC SERGEANT, Co. A, 18th, and C. 4th N. Y.

West Virginia Patriots. I served nearly four years in the Union army during the late rebellion in Co. F and A, 1st W. V. H. A. I see a great many interesting letters from the old boys from other States, but very few from West Virginia. We are not ashamed of the part we took in the great struggle. I have seen West Virginia regiments sent into the gap where others had failed, and they held the ground. I believe there is as much loyalty and patriotism in West Virginia to the square foot as there is anywhere in the United States, and there is much good talent among the veterans, who could send letters to THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE that would bring forth cheers all along the line. I write this only to get them started.

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On another occasion a man walking through Nantes was suddenly enveloped in lightning, yet remained uninjured. When he reached home, however, and opened his purse, which had contained two pieces of silver and one of gold, he found that the gold piece had vanished and in its place was a silver piece. The lightning had, in fact, pierced through the leather of the purse and covered the gold piece with a coating of silver taken from the other two coins.

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